

Virginia Department of Social Services

Permanency

Promoting Safe and Stable Families

Foster Care Services Adoption Services Independent Living Services

Volume 1, Issue 2

August 2004

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From the Program Manager

The first issue of the Permanency Newsletter dealt with some of the initiatives in the home office. In this issue, you will find initiatives from some local departments of social services.

It has been a busy month in the Permanency Unit. Some accomplishments were:

- The Unit helped finalized the Program Improvement Plan (PIP) and it has been submitted to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for review and approval.
- The 2005-2009 state plan for Child and Family Services was completed and submitted to

Adoption Parties: A Permanent Family for 4 Siblings

VDSS continuously works toward reducing the number of children who wait for permanent families. Recruitment of families for these children can be a challenge. With this in mind, some agencies throughout the state plan and implement a variety of activities that support best practices in adoption. These activities include matching parties using the facilities at local bowling alleys, zoological parks, skating rinks, and amusement parks. These events are planned with the ultimate goal of finding a family for a child.

At a recent party held at the zoological park in Norfolk on

June 18, 2004, 33 waiting children and fifty adults listened to a mini-presentation about the animals that are residents of the facility, ate lunch, and then wandered through the gardens and animal viewing stations. The groups were divided to allow the children to interact with all of the families.

The outcome of the event in Norfolk far exceeded anyone's expectation! **The hero of the day was Vernice Seth, who has worked in foster care with Norfolk DSS for over five years but is new to the adoption arena.** Wanting to do everything possible to find a family for the children

on her caseload, Vernice brought several of the children to the party at the zoo. Included was a sibling group of four African American brothers. The boys are 9 to 14 years old, and they want to remain together. A couple who had already raised several male children also came to the event. They still wanted to parent, but as great as it was to raise all those boys; the couple now had a daughter in mind. That plan flew out the window when they met the 'quad!' The couple could not resist pursuing the idea of raising some more great boys.

Continued on Page 8

ACF. The annual progress and services report for the fiscal years 2000-2004 was included.

- This month was also the kickoff for the Adopt USKids campaign. The new advertisements will be on your local TV stations.
- Interviews have been held for two positions. At this time, we are awaiting the approval

from the Division of Human Resources.

- The contracts for Adoption Services are in the process for approval.
- The unit is preparing for the Title IV-E Foster Care Review that will be held the week of August 23, 2004.

As always, things keep moving along at a rapid pace!

Brenda

The hardest years in life are those between ten and seventy.
-Helen Hayes
(at 73)

Kinship Care



Richmond City Department of Social Services with support from the permanency unit submitted the application for the Casey Family Programs grant, "Supporting Kinship Care Breakthrough Series Collaborative." The grant provides a learning and sharing environment for twenty public child welfare agencies/tribes (state agencies in state-administered systems,

county agencies in county-administered systems, tribal agencies or tribal consortiums) from across the country to share knowledge, strategies, challenges, and successes related to kinship care programs. The program would provide front end services to families to prevent foster care placements and better support and stabilize kin care families. On July 14, 2004, the Casey Family

Programs announced that Richmond City was not one of the grantees. However, Richmond City still remains an agency that the home office's permanency unit plans to collaborate for developing a program model for front end services to kin care families.

For more information, contact Lyndell Lewis, VDSS

Program Improvements

"Leadership is the wise use of power. Power is the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it."
Warren Bennis

The Child Welfare Advisory Committee Meeting took place on June 25, 2004. Committee members reviewed the most recent draft of the Program Improvement Plan and provided comments. The committee was also asked to review the Child and Family Services Plan and provide comments.

An all-day Concurrent Planning orientation meeting took place on June 28, 2004. Thirteen of the fourteen pilot agencies were present. Roles and responsibilities

and the importance of agency 'buy-in' were among the topics discussed. There was also a panel of those who are among the initial pilot agencies. They shared information about their experiences and took questions from agencies that will be in the next phase of the pilot. The new pilots will work in two cluster groups. The Montgomery County cluster will meet August 13, 2004 from 10a.m.-2 p.m. and the Hanover cluster group will meet August 17, 2004 from

10a.m.-2 p.m.

Plans for the Bright Futures Mental Health Curriculum to be piloted to 15 child welfare workers and 15 Community Services Board staff will be held in Roanoke on August 20, 2004 from 10a.m.-2 p.m. This training is being coordinated through collaboration with Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (MHMRAS).

For more information, contact Therese Wolf, VDSS



TV 12—Richmond Partnership

VDSS (Permanency Unit) and Channel 12 are partnering to create an online Adoption Resource Fair for Central Virginia. This three-month project is slated to be available in November 2004 in conjunction with National Adoption Month. If it is

successful, plans will be made to continue the site with appropriate sponsorships. The site will carry information on the adoption laws in Virginia, the adoption process, available resources in the central area that support the different

types of adoption, and other information of interest to all members of the adoption triad.

For more information contact AREVA

Sondra Draper, VDSS

Youth Advisory Council

The Virginia Youth Advisory Council (VA-YAC), ages 15-21, represents all youth in Virginia's Foster Care System. In addition, VA-YAC is involved in the decision-making process of developing policies and regulations affecting foster care youth as it promotes leadership, advocacy, teamwork and positive effects within the community. VA-YAC strives to motivate youth to continue to take advantage of foster care services necessary for lifelong learning and success in the future as well as providing a platform for youth voices to be heard.

VA-YAC's training and meeting were held July 9-11, 2004 at Radford University in Radford, Virginia. The theme of the training was entitled "Back To School Rally 2004." VA-YAC successfully reached its recruitment goal for new participants from the Western/Piedmont areas as well as returning youth members and participants throughout Virginia. All youth attendees were afforded the opportunity to gain pertinent knowledge about post-secondary opportunities which consisted of:

The College Search Process

- Getting Organized for School with Studying and Test Taking Tips
- Vocational Opportu-

nities

- Financial Aid and Scholarships
- A Campus Tour

The college experience provided VA-YAC attendees the opportunity to stay on a college campus and participate in activities geared to help youth with decisions for their educational goals.

VA-YAC social activities included a motivational speaker, Chris Skinner, a Radford University Alumni, who shared his experiences of "Temporary Fun" and the consequences he suffered because of his bad decisions. One night while partying and drinking excessively, he was involved in a terrible automobile accident that resulted in him being paralyzed from the neck down. After a long recuperation and hours and hours of physical therapy, Mr. Skinner was able to return to college and complete the goals he had set for himself. VA-YAC attendees were very motivated and moved by Mr. Skinner and his experiences. His message gave them a different perspective on life.

Saturday night twelve of our youth participated in a Fashion/Talent Show and they displayed a wide range of talents in art, music, fashion and poetry. The audience was awed and inspired to say the least.

Radford University pro-

vided an information session to our youth that outlined the application/admissions process and gave tips on how to improve their chances for acceptance to the college of their choice. This was followed by a tour of the campus facility. Questions abound, enthusiasm was high, and the youth left with a more realistic view of college life.



Overall, the VA-YAC training/meeting was a success! VA-YAC looks forward to its next event scheduled for October 15-17, 2004 in the eastern area of Virginia.

For more information, contact Patrick Plourde, VDSS



For VA-YAC's Fall 2004 Training and Meeting Updates Next Month

How will this affect the child?



Kenya



Jay

37% Estimated
percentage of
people ages 16 to
19 who will find a
job between now
and September.
Time Magazine
7-12-04

Risk and Safety Assessment—Alexandria

The Alexandria Division of Social Services has implemented structured risk and safety assessment protocols for continuous use from the time a child enters the child welfare system until permanency is achieved. These extensive assessment tools were developed with the assistance of the National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment, a service of the Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; and by the Child Welfare Institute, a nationally recognized leader in the provision of consultation services to state and local child welfare and hu-

man services agencies. Use of the new tools began January 22, 2002 in Alexandria DSS. In all new cases, risk and safety assessments begin with the entrance of the family into the child welfare system. For existing cases, the risk and safety assessment process began in conjunction with service plan reviews, which are required at a minimum of every six months. Barry Salovitz, Director of Program Development at the Child Welfare Institute, continues to provide training and consultation.

on the new protocols was conducted for interested stakeholders. Approximately sixty people attended the sessions. Participants included personnel from Mental Health Services, Police, the Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) program, Juvenile Court Services, guardians ad litem (attorneys), and Juvenile Judges.

For more information contact:

Suzanne T. Chis, Director of Social Services, Alexandria Division of Social Services

In February 2002, training

**Send us articles on
best practices
you are using in your agency**

Parent-Child Development Corporation—King William

King William's Safe and Stable Families Program is implemented primarily by the Parent-Child Development Corporation (PCDC). The Program is a combination of services targeted to specific at-risk populations as well as to the general population. The services are designed to enhance existing programs to children and families and to fill gaps in services to high-risk family populations. The services are

primarily preventive in nature and focus on family support services. Some of the services have included parenting skills education, family education workshops, establishment of two family resource centers, newspaper articles on parenting issues, and a family literacy program. The program has been a successful addition to prevention and intervention services in the county while creating effective partner-

ships among agencies such as the school divisions, private non-profit, businesses, and the department of social services.

For further information contact:

Anne M. Mitchell, Social Work Supervisor, King William County Department of Social Services

Ashauny



Group Homes Program—Bedford

Bedford County Department of Social Services' administration realized, shortly after the implementation of the Comprehensive Services Act, that in order to maintain children in the community and to provide cost effective services and care to teens heading to residential placements, a group home program would be the best alternative. With the cooperation from our CPMT (Community Policy and Management Team), Bedford DSS proceeded with the development of a group home type activity in the summer of 1998. We experimented with various ideas and in June of 2001 received a Provisional License to operate a fifteen bed facility (ten boys and five girls) known as Bedford Group Homes, a division of Bedford DSS. Our permanent license was issued by the State Department of Social Services in December 2001.

Bedford DSS foster care case load ranges from 120 to 150 cases monthly, many of the

older children, mainly CHINS (Children in Need of Services) cases, can not be managed by traditional foster homes but need to be placed in costly therapeutic residential care. Our fifteen bed home offers a very cost effective (approximately one third the daily rate), and quality care alternative. The results have been very positive.

Our home offers the resources to provide care for children and adolescents, ages 10-17. While the average stay is six months, a child may stay until he/she reaches 18 or even attends college. We have three group homes with five beds per home. Bedford children usually occupy 12 to 13 of these beds, so space is limited. There are two staff members for every five residents.

It is anticipated that the program will be expanded with ten additional beds within the next 12 months.

Admission Criteria:

- Children ages 10-17 in

foster care

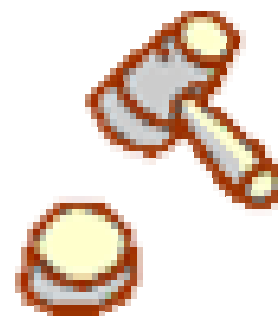
- Not harmful to self or others
- Not suicidal or exhibiting aggressive behavior to others
- Must have an IQ of 70 or above
- Must be ambulatory

Services Upon Admission:
(These services are covered by Medicaid through outside vendors)

- Physical examination and Tuberculosis (TB) test
- Dental examination
- Psychological and medication evaluation
- Substance abuse counseling for individual and family

For more information contact:

Leighton Langford, Director, Bedford DSS



10% Drop in teen employment between 2000 –2003 pushing the job rate for the group to a 55-year low.
Time Magazine
July 12, 2004

Case Collaboration—Alexandria

Case collaboration occurs prior to the reunification of any foster child and involves all key parties to the case, including foster parents, attorneys for the parties, guardians ad litem, service providers, and Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA). With the implementation of the structured risk and safety assessments, the case collaboration proc-

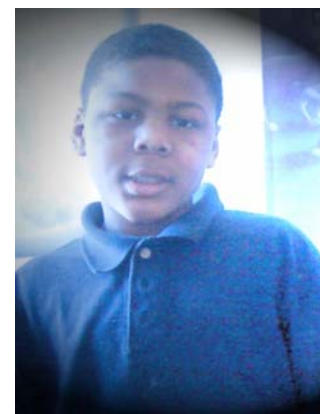
ess now includes a review by all parties of the permanency planning protocol that was specifically developed to be used with reunification plans, and requires sign-off by all participants in the collaboration meeting. Formalizing the process has helped assure that all partners have been fully apprized of the reunification plan and the potential risks.

Any reservations are discussed and addressed. Review of the permanency planning protocol shows clearly that multiple issues were considered and evaluated.

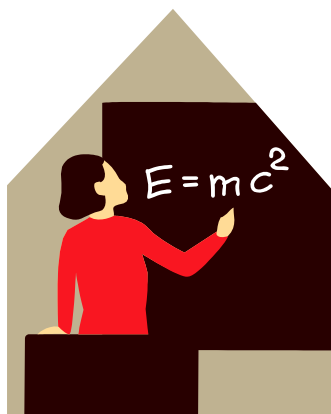
For more information contact:

Suzanne T. Chis, Director of Social Services, Alexandria City DSS

Amon



Foster and Adoptive Pre-Service Training—Richmond City



(This is an example of PRIDE)

Richmond City Department of Social Services provides four series of pre-service training sessions consisting of an orientation and additional eight weekly two-hour classes. The primary objective of the nine-week training is to provide information and skills training on various aspects of the foster care and adoption processes, and the impact of having foster children in the home so that prospective families can self-screen. Prospective foster parents are encouraged to consider their own family and personal situation, and their commitment to making placements successful in determining whether they should follow through with an application immediately following the completion of training. They also are given the option of waiting up to a

87% of young Americans now earn high school diplomas
Time Magazine
July 26, 2004

Latorya and Timothy



year if temporary circumstances, such as a divorce, death in the family or other emotionally challenging events have occurred that would prevent them from devoting sufficient time and energy to the child placed with them. Lastly, suggestions for ‘making a difference’ to foster children, such as participation in Volunteer Emergency Families for Children (VEFC) or mentoring, are offered to participants who remain undecided about their ability to make a potentially long-term commitment to a child.

Pre-service training for prospective foster and adoptive families with the Richmond City Department of Social Services consists of the following:

- ◇ Orientation;
- ◇ Agency expectations of the foster parent (includes presentation by a foster care worker);
- ◇ Role of the natural parent;
- ◇ Foster care system (includes presentation by child protective service and domestic violence prevention workers);
- ◇ Working with the sexually-abused child;
- ◇ Working with children with attachment issues
- ◇ Creative discipline
- ◇ Understanding and dealing with loss, separation and grief/anger management tech-

niques; and

- ◇ Review and evaluation of training, distribution of certificates, and pot-luck dinner with all foster parent trainers and supervisors present.

The agency also includes a two-session training program for the children of potential foster and adoptive parents in an effort to educate and prepare them for the fostering experience. Children ages five through 15 are invited to participate. This training is held during consecutive sessions of pre-service training for foster and adoptive parents about mid-way through the series. The first session helps children learn about the foster care system and the many ‘members of a team.’ The realities of having foster siblings who are a part of the family for an unspecific and unknown period are explored. The child is given ways to cope with the wide variety of new feelings, behaviors and problems typically brought into the home by fostering. The second session focuses on how the child can help the foster or adoptive child feel comfortable and accepted in their home and community, the importance of confidentiality, and an age-appropriate discussion of loss, separation and grief issues.

For more information contact:

Olivia Stokes, Unit Supervisor, Richmond City DSS

Court Reviews and Services Plans—Wise

Wise County Department of Social Services is collaborating with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court in the Virginia Court Best Practice Program. Since November 2002, Wise County Department of Social Services has implemented this team approach to ensure accurate time lines regarding court reviews and

filing service plans. This assists our agency in staying compliant and maintaining continued eligibility of IV-E cases and the permanency requirements of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

Initially, the court clerk reviewed every file and met with each social worker to ensure the files were coded

accurately. Thereafter, DSS sends a copy of all children in care, which the court clerk checks against her list to ensure all children's case are reviewed in a timely manner.

For more information contact:

Dale Stover, Foster Care Supervisor, Wise DSS

Adopt

U.S.

Kids



Antwon

Antwon, along with the other children pictured in this newsletter, are available for adoption.

Call the AREVA hotline at

1-800-DO ADOPT

68% of children
now live in a home
with two married
parents.
Time Magazine
July 26, 2004

Court Services Liaison/Mediation—York-Poquoson

York-Poquoson DSS has an outstanding relationship with the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court, which enables the agency, court, and parties involved to receive the services needed. The agency has been innovative in establishing the position of Court Services Liaison and has gained the confidence and respect of the court. Process and procedures have been established with the court and judge that assures the involvement of DSS when appropriate and makes the best use of court's and DSS' staff time. In most cases, the Court Services Liaison

can mediate an agreement between parties prior to the first hearing.

All the staff in the Court Unit are certified mediators, who have extensive experience in other programs and with other agencies. Staff works well together and support each other. Cases are staffed by DSS to ensure that children and families receive the best service possible. Staffing cases at entry is very productive and helpful in deciding how to manage the case. The teams staff cases initially and continue to staff on-going cases, so

that no worker has to make decisions alone. Services are provided to keep children from going into foster care and to keep families together.

For more information contact:

Carolyn Griffith, Senior Social Work Supervisor ,

Robyn Lamp, Child Protective Services Supervisor ,

Sue Frost, Foster Care/Court Supervisor ,

York-Poquoson Department of Social Services



**You
don't
have
to be
perfect
to be a
parent**

**83% of the kids in
the U.S. are in good
or excellent health.
Time Magazine
July 26, 2004**

Piedmont Regional Adoption Group (PRAG) - Danville

The purpose of the Piedmont Regional Adoption Group (PRAG) is to continue to improve adoption services to waiting children in the seven-agency cluster area of the Piedmont Region. This geographic area includes the localities of: Lynchburg City (lead agency number one), Bedford, Campbell and Amherst County DSS. Lead agency number two is Danville City who works with Halifax and Pittsylvania Counties DSS. Funding for the project comes from a \$105,000 grant which is shared by the two lead agencies.

The objectives of the grant are to continue to develop and increase the number of waiting families with approved home studies so that when children become free for adoption; hopefully, an appropriate waiting family can be matched with the waiting child. PRAG also works closely with other adoption agencies such as all department of social services within the state, One Church/One Child, Commonwealth Catholic Charities, Lutheran Family Services, People Places, and United

Methodist Family Services, etc.

Each lead agency has a recruitment worker whose job is to recruit, train, and prepare adoptive families through the home study process. A consistent and prompt method of addressing inquiries about adoption is available through a toll-free phone number in Lynchburg. Inquiries from the Danville region are forwarded to the recruiter/trainer there.

Those families who are approved as adoptive families are not only listed with AREVA at the Virginia DSS home office, but an updated list of waiting families are sent out by e-mail each month to the seven collaborating agencies.

Recruitment strategies include speaking at local churches, the use of billboards and banners along major routes, information booths at local festival events, two regional match retreats for adoption workers in the state per fiscal year, two adoption parties

per year for the children and approved families, as well as radio and television coverage. Another goal is to continually develop relationships and collaborate with adoption workers from other agencies through monthly meetings or conferences.

The two lead agencies also sponsor two regional training events per fiscal year for both DSS staff and adoptive or foster families. A training subcommittee continually strives to improve on the quality of the training by identifying topics which would enhance the ability of families to successfully parent special needs children. Two adoption support groups meet monthly in each lead agency's areas. These groups are available not only as a support system for foster and adoptive families, but are another avenue for sharing information with one another through tapes, individual testimonies, or speakers.

For more information contact:

Ruth Ann Cumbo, Danville
Division of Social Services

Carrieoma and Emmett



Adoption Parties: A Permanent Family for 4 Siblings, Continued from Page 1

Now, the lucky 'quad' has a permanent family.

The supervisor of the adoption unit at Norfolk has indicated that several other matches were made at that party and they anticipate

two sibling groups of two and a single placement by the end of July. These workers are extremely excited about these potential placements and look forward to other opportunities to showcase their children.

Court Mediation Project—King William

King William County Department of Social Services and the King William Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court have partnered to provide mediation services to all petitioners for custody/visitation within the county. Petitioners for custody and visitation are referred to social services for an orientation session on the mediation process and alternatives to mediation. Once a month, there is a group orientation session at the agency consisting of a brief video describing the mediation process and a one-on-one screening process to determine if parties are appropriate for and agreeable to

mediation. There are certified mediators available on site to meet with parties. If mediation is not appropriate or if the parties cannot agree, the court is advised of the necessity for home study reports and for a court date. In the majority of cases, there is a mediated agreement submitted to the court and no further court action is needed. The process reduces the court docket and the number of home study orders for the agency. We find that parties who set their own custody and visitation arrangements are more likely to adhere to them, and therefore, greatly reduces the number of repeat

appearances in court for show cause petitions. King William DSS' involvement at the beginning of the process allows for referrals to appropriate resources and service provision can begin, if needed, for preventive services. All parties are mandated to complete a parenting class addressing issues which may arise while parenting together, yet separate.

For further information contact:

Anne M. Mitchell, Social Work Supervisor, King William County DSS



78% drop in violent crime committed by teens from 1993 to 2002.

**Time Magazine
July 26, 2004**

Family Focus Groups—Scott

The Family Focus Program is operated by the Scott County DSS and designed to provide intensive services to families with children at risk for out-of-home placement. One social worker is employed, 32 hours per week, by DSS to work with approximately eight families at any given time and exclusively with the Family Focus clients. Referrals are received from CPS, foster care, the school system, court services, and the FAPT (Family Assessment and Planning Team) Team. The families are assessed by the Family Focus Social Worker to determine the risk

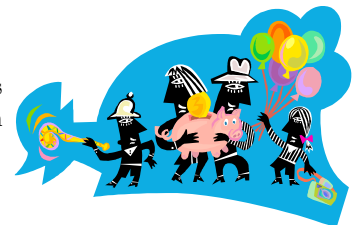
in the home and if services would be beneficial. When accepted, Family Focus provides a variety of services which range from assistance with concrete needs to family counseling in the home. Services often include parenting education, nutrition, housekeeping, budgeting, educational support, transportation, and assistance in gaining needed medical, dental and psychological services. Family Focus continues to work with the family to preserve the family unit as long as the child's safety is not at risk. To date, the Family Focus Program has been effective in preventing

out-of-home placements and/or reunifying families. The foster care caseload in Scott County has decreased by 20% since the inception of this program.

Family Focus began in 1993 with seed money through the Comprehensive Services Trust Fund Grant. Since that time, Family Focus has maintained funding through other small grants and is now funded by Promoting Safe and Stable Families.

For information contact

Lana Mullins, Scott County Department of Social Ser-



Virginia Department of Social Services

Fax 804-726-7499

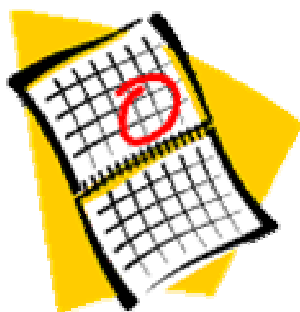
Permanency Unit, 4th Floor
7 North Eighth Street
Richmond, VA 23219-3301

Submit newsletter information to:
Diane.Reid@dss.virginia.gov

We are on the web:

<http://www.localagency.dss.state.va.us/divisions/dfs>

<http://www.dss.state.va.us/family/children.html>



Calendar

August 2004

Training

8/2-3—Training for Concurrent Planning Pilots: “Bridging the Gap”

8/2-4—The Family as a System, Fairfax

8/5-6—Sexual Abuse, Richmond

8/6 - Effective Use of Power, Abingdon

8/9-10—Training for Concurrent Planning Pilots: “Bridging the Gap”

8/10—Independent Living Program New Worker

8/10-11 - Exploring Child Welfare, Williamsburg

8/11- Introduction to Permanency Planning, Warrenton

8/12—Independent Living Program Reports Training

8/12-13 - Worker Safety Issues, Warrenton

8/16—Ethical Decision Making, Abingdon

8/16-17—Sexual Abuse, Fairfax and Roanoke

8/17-18—Case Documentation, Norfolk

8/17-18—Supervising Case Plan Development

8/18-19 - Separation and Loss in Human Service Practice, Roanoke

8/19—Writing a Transitional Independent Living Plan and Youth Assessment Tools

8/19-20—Crisis Intervention, Williamsburg

8/20—Bright Futures MHMRSAS, Roanoke

8/24—Utilization of Program Funds Training

8/24—Strategies for Change with Substance-Abusing

Caregivers, Norfolk

8/26—Youth Services to Promote Independent Living and Starting a Youth Advisory Council in Your Service Area

8/26- Permanency Planning for Teens—Creating Life Long Connections, Richmond

8/26-27 - Principles of Human Services, Abingdon

8/27 - Putting the Pieces Together: Working the Puzzle between Child Welfare and Substance Use Services, Abingdon

8/30-9/2 - Foster Care Policy—Warrenton

8/31- Independent Living Program New Worker Training

8/31- Building Bridges: Managing Drug-Involved Children, Richmond

8/31—WINDOWS training, Abingdon

Meeting

8/13—Montgomery Concurrent Planning Cluster meeting.

8/17—Hanover Concurrent Planning Cluster meeting.

Deadlines

8/1—End of the logo contest to name the Permanency Unit Newsletter

Events

8/10—Vicky Johnson-Scott, Director of the Division of Family Services, first day (Broadcast 2757)

8/23-27—Federal review of Title IV-E (Broadcast 2764)

8/29—Adoption Party in Forest Hill Park, Richmond. Contact Lutheran Family Services